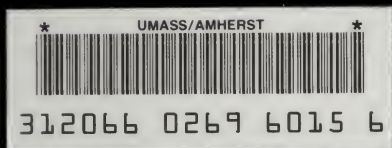


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Workplace Violence:

Prevention and Management

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Introduction

Workplace violence has become a national phenomenon. News stories about violent incidents appear daily in the media. It is important not to ignore this reality. It is equally important to be well informed in order to respond appropriately and safely in the event of a threat or incident of violence.

Violence in the workplace may occur between employees (faculty, administrators, or staff), may be initiated by any other person against a University employee, or may be random violence which has no apparent connection to the University. There is no way to predict random violence. However, in the workplace, there may be signs of escalating stress and threats prior to a violent incident. The stress may be work-related or result from outside factors. We can all learn how to recognize stress in ourselves and others, to manage anger, and to de-escalate potentially violent interactions.

This booklet has been prepared by the Workplace Violence Management Team as an aid to increase awareness of the potential for workplace violence at the University of Massachusetts Amherst. The intent of this booklet is to address openly the issues surrounding workplace violence in an effort to prevent such occurrences. It is not written to cause apprehension or alarm among University employees. We hope that you will read it and discuss the ideas and suggestions presented here with your co-workers.

GOVERNMENT DOCUMENTS
COLLECTION

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University of Massachusetts
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A Message from the Chancellor

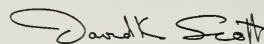
The University is committed to maintaining a safe working, learning, and living environment for all members of the University community. A rise in the level of violent behavior has become increasingly a matter of national concern. It is a concern on this campus as well. The incidence of uncivil behavior in offices, classrooms, residence halls, and elsewhere on campus is extremely disturbing since it can lead to threats of violence and even violence itself.

In an attempt to address this issue proactively, I want to advise you of the steps the University has taken to ensure a safe community. I also want to enlist your assistance in this effort. In February 1995, I established the Task Force on Workplace Violence to examine the causes and incidence of violence on campus. The Task Force recommended to me several measures intended to prevent violence as well as to manage violent situations if they arise. These recommendations have been implemented and are outlined in this booklet.

Threats, acts of aggression, and violence are unacceptable in the University community. Although it is not always possible to prevent threatening statements or behaviors, as a concerned community it is our collective responsibility to report threatening statements or actions immediately. If you experience a threatening situation or know of any instance involving threats of physical violence toward anyone, whether from inside or outside the University community, it is imperative that you report it to a supervisor or department head, or to the Department of Public Safety, tel. 545-2121, if appropriate.

Each report will be carefully assessed to determine an appropriate institutional response. This may include further investigation, security assistance, and/or contact with law enforcement authorities. Although departmental action may not be made public, subject to applicable state and federal law and University policies, you can be assured that all reports will be taken seriously and investigated promptly. Any threat or violent act by an employee or student will be considered serious misconduct and may be the basis for disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal.

For advice and assistance please refer to the resources listed on page 11 of this publication.



David K. Scott
Chancellor

The Workplace Violence Management Team

The Workplace Violence Management Team (originally the Task Force on Workplace Violence) was established to address in a systematic way the potential incidence and prevention of violence in the workplace. Its mission is to coordinate the University's efforts to address workplace violence, including proposing and updating related policies and procedures. To effectively accomplish its mission, the Team is divided into three workgroups — Prevention and Education, Risk Assessment, and Crisis Management.

The Prevention and Education workgroup's responsibilities are to develop and to update policies and procedures, and to promote training on related issues such as managing conflict, anger, and stress. A primary focus is to provide broad-based training and awareness of available resources for supervisors on workplace violence, including violence prevention. Inquiries may be directed to Training and Development, tel. 545-1787.

The Risk Assessment workgroup is available for consultation in situations of potential workplace violence to assess the level of risk, to identify the individuals at risk, and to determine security issues. The group can help to: 1) develop strategies to de-escalate a potentially violent situation, 2) make recommendations for action, 3) plan for various responses or outcomes, and 4) coordinate resources as needed. The group is not, however, a substitute for good management, nor does involving the team absolve a manager from taking any necessary and appropriate action. Consultation may be initiated by contacting the Employee Assistance Program (EAP), tel. 545-0350.

The Crisis Management workgroup coordinates crisis intervention when an incident of workplace violence occurs. Working with the Department of Public Safety, the workgroup coordinates resources and services for the victim, supervisor, and others affected by the incident. Group members follow up with the victim and others, arrange debriefing sessions as necessary, monitor campus climate in the aftermath of the incident, and evaluate the crisis management process. In an emergency, call 911.

Guidelines for Preventing and Managing Violent Incidents

SECTION 1: AWARENESS AND PREVENTION

An organization's most important lines of defense against workplace violence are to combine preventive human resources practices with close attention to the warning signs of violent behavior. All employees should be aware of the warning signs, of what they can do to prevent potentially dangerous situations, and of how to respond to violence or threats of violence.

A. Definitions

Acts of aggression include verbal or physical actions that create fear of bodily harm or threaten the safety of any employee, student, or member of the general public.

Acts of violence include any intentional or reckless act that causes injury or property loss to any employee, student, or member of the general public.

Examples of such behavior include, but are not limited to:

- behavior or actions that would be interpreted by a reasonable person as carrying the potential for violence and/or acts of aggression (e.g., throwing objects, waving fists, ranting, destroying property),
- any credible threat to harm another individual or in any way endanger the safety of others,
- any physical assaults, and
- any credible threat to destroy property.

B. Warning Signs

It is known that individuals with a history of violence, currently untreated mental illness, active substance abuse, or persons who are experiencing a build-up of life and workplace stresses may be at high risk for acts of aggression or violence.

Examples of potential warning signs may include, but are not limited to:

- uncharacteristic behavior that might signal emotional distress,
- evidence of alcohol or other drug abuse,
- various forms of intimidation directed toward others,
- extreme changes in behavior and/or beliefs,

- an obsession with weapons, gun magazines, or the discussion of weapons, and
- excessive interest in recent acts of workplace violence.

If you become aware of, or concerned about, these or similar behaviors by an individual, you may want to discuss your concern with your supervisor or seek other assistance. Appropriate campus resources are listed on page 11 of this booklet.

C. Supervisory Responsibilities in Helping to Prevent Workplace Violence

At the University of Massachusetts Amherst, all faculty and staff share the responsibility to report threats or acts of violence on campus to a supervisor, department head, or Public Safety. Threats, acts of aggression, and violence are unacceptable in the University community. Such actions may result in disciplinary measures up to and including discharge. Criminal prosecution may result if federal, state, or local laws are violated. Any acts of aggression or acts of violence, as defined above, require intervention on the part of a supervisor.

Some examples of possible interventions include, but are not limited to:

- consultation with supervisor,
- contacting the Risk Assessment Team, or other appropriate resources,
- referral to EAP or other counseling resources,
- recommended or required training,
- preventive feedback about unacceptable behavior,
- listening to concerns of other affected parties, and
- training employees to be aware of threatening situations.

When time and safety permit, you are urged to seek consultation from EAP, Human Resources, and/or the Department of Public Safety to determine an appropriate course of action.

If your office provides services to customers that may involve levels of tension or stress, or where there is a possibility of conflict, you may want to consider a physical security survey or assessment. If requested, staff from the Department of Public Safety can make recommendations regarding the physical security of your work space and offer practical safety advice about office arrangements, early warning signs, safe rooms, and other security measures. If interested, you should contact the Director of Public Safety, tel. 545-2125, for more information.

SECTION 2: WHAT TO DO IF A THREAT OR ACT OF VIOLENCE OCCURS

A. Guidelines for All Employees

1. Try to Remain Calm:

Calmness may be very difficult to achieve when an actual or potentially violent situation occurs. A violent or threatening person is more likely to respond to someone who approaches him or her calmly and confidently, without anger or defensiveness. Do not touch the person.

Other suggestions to help you de-escalate these situations:

- Monitor your non-verbal cues.
- Avoid invasion of "personal space"; keep a safe distance of three to six feet.
- Avoid any type of challenging stance (hands on hips, nose-to-nose, etc.).
- Moderate the tone, volume, and rate of your verbal communication.
- Use empathetic listening — listen to what the person is really saying.
- Don't challenge, argue, or make promises.

2. Assess What's Happening — Suggested Responses

- Is it safe to ask the threatening or aggressive person to leave the scene?

Calmly ask the person to leave. If he or she complies, the incident should still be reported promptly to a supervisor or Public Safety, as appropriate.

- If it is not safe to ask the person to leave, are you able to leave?

Clear the affected area. Call 911 with concise information.

- If you are not able to leave, is it safe for you or someone else to call for help?

Call 911, or ask someone else to do so. Wait for Public Safety; try to keep yourself and others calm.

- If it is not safe to leave and you cannot call for help, what should you do?

Try to stay calm. Make your voice and facial expression flat. Clear the affected area if it is safe to do so. Wait for Public Safety.

- If you notice that someone else is in danger and cannot safely call for help, what do you do?

Call 911 with clear information.

- Is a weapon involved?

Call 911 or have someone else do so.

B. Guidelines for Supervisors During an Incident

In addition to following the above guidelines, supervisors, when possible, should:

- determine the location and safety of all staff members,
- be available for consultation with Public Safety and other authorities to provide necessary information and to determine when it is safe to return to the workplace,
- try to model a calm, non-provocative response to help de-escalate the situation, and
- listen attentively to staff members' concerns, information, and fears.

SECTION 3: AFTER A THREAT OR VIOLENT ACT OCCURS

A. Reporting

After the safety of the workplace is restored, staff directly affected by the situation will be asked by Public Safety to provide statements. Staff may also be asked to provide a written summary of the events.

When all of the facts are known and the parties involved have had a chance to collect themselves, information will be shared with other staff as appropriate.

Being involved in a threatening or potentially violent situation may have lingering physical and psychological effects. Anyone involved is encouraged to seek help from the appropriate resources listed on page 11 of this booklet.

B. Anticipate Public Inquiry

If you are contacted by the media, please direct all inquiries to the University News Office, tel. 545-0444. Other inquiries should be directed to an appropriate supervisor.

C. Supervisory Responsibilities After an Incident Occurs

Supervisory follow-through after an incident will significantly affect unit operations, morale, and the response of those involved. Good follow-through includes the following steps:

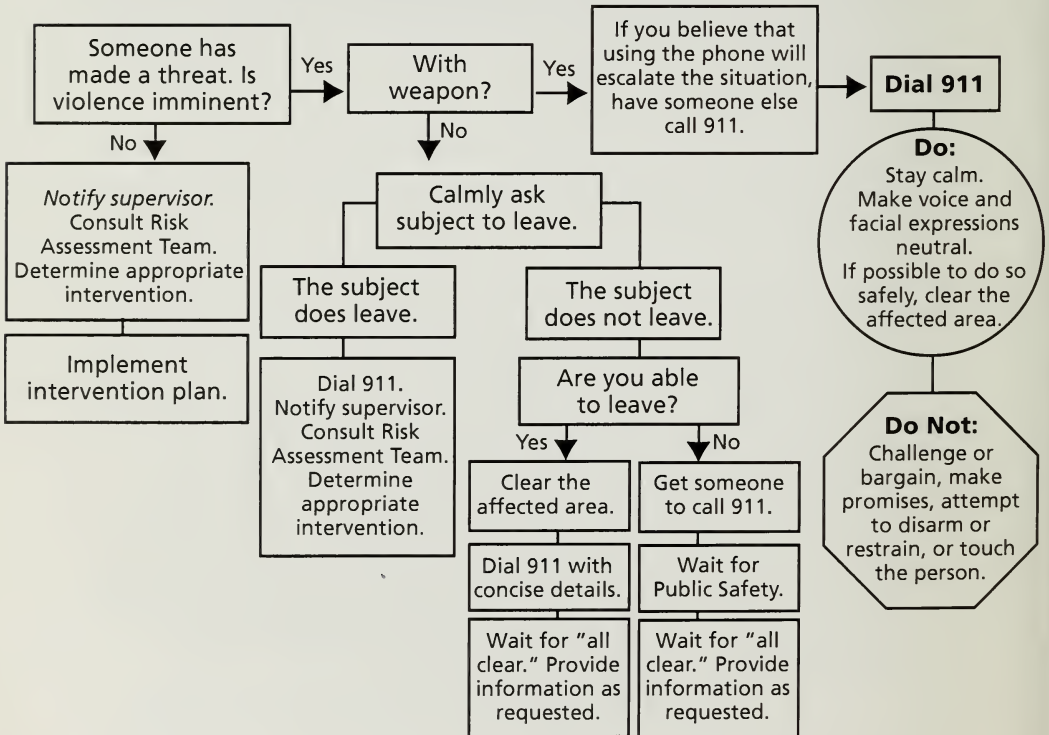
- After the safety of the workplace has been restored, provide the facts, details, and names of witnesses to Public Safety.
- Provide reassurance to individuals, family members, and co-workers that the problem is being addressed. This will control rumors and calm the environment.
- Be prepared to work with the Workplace Violence Management Team to coordinate an institutional response to the incident and to assist those involved in seeking appropriate resources.
- Initiate disciplinary action, as appropriate.

Conclusion

This publication is only a starting point. We hope that, having read it, you will discuss the ideas and suggestions presented here with your co-workers and staff. Supervisors are encouraged to devote part of a staff meeting to a discussion of the issue of violence in the workplace or arrange for Training and Development to conduct a workshop. While the potential for violence can never be totally eliminated, awareness and education are key to its prevention and may help to minimize its effects.

Workplace Violence: A Quick Reference

The following guidelines have been developed to assist employees at the University of Massachusetts Amherst if threats or violence should occur in the workplace. These guidelines are based on recommendations by the Workplace Violence Management Team in conjunction with the Department of Public Safety, the Employee Assistance Program, and the Division of Human Resources.



IN CASE OF EMERGENCY DIAL 911

CAMPUS RESOURCES

For risk assessment consultation	Employee Assistance Program 545-0350
For information on coping with threats of violence in the workplace	Human Resources 545-0380
	Employee Labor Relations 545-2736
	Employee Assistance Program 545-0350
	Ombuds Office 545-0867
	Mental Health Services 545-2337
(if an undergraduate student is involved)	Dean of Students 545-2684
(if a graduate student is involved)	Dean of the Graduate School 545-5271
For information on personal safety	Department of Public Safety 545-2121
For information on coping with domestic violence and sexual assault	Everywoman's Center Counselor/Advocate Program Crisis Hotline 545-0800
For information on employee training and organizational development	Training and Development 545-1787
For information and/or assistance in coping with the aftermath of a violent incident	Employee Assistance Program 545-0350

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